



# Inspirations from The Noble Quran Ideas for Better Life...

Volume Two

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‘La hawla wa la quwwata illa billah.’

(There is no power and no strength except with Allah)

I dedicate this humble contribution to our beloved

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and then to all elders of  
Alavi family



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## Preface

Life has become extra fast and has taken away the opportunity to pause, think and reflect: we spend first 1/3<sup>rd</sup>. of our life span in acquiring skills not education to forge a good earning career; we spend the next 1/3<sup>rd</sup>. of our life span earning and maximizing our wealth and to afford unending needs (desires); the final 1/3<sup>rd</sup>. of our life span mostly becomes an extension of our career pursuits, for by that time we are either so much addicted to the lavish life style or so much indebted while some are challenged to make their ends meet even for a basic living.

No doubt we have tremendously up-scaled physical quality of our lives in modern times, however sadly our connection with Allah is reduced to a cursory level, just like we go back to our beloved father on “Father’s Day” once in a year. Similar is the case with our faith. We have lost the spirit of it for a few rituals that we practice. In short, we come to this world and live rather heedlessly and die though we think we have attained a lot of success.

It is never too late to rejuvenate our lives and instill meaning to it. It only demands to “Pause, think and reflect”. Our knowledge is bounded but divine knowledge is infinite, which we are given to us in the shape of four known holy books – Zaboor, Torah, Injeel and the Noble Quran the latest and final version. We simply need to ponder upon the knowledge given in these books.

Alhamdulillah, I have Islamic faith since birth but not until recently when I analyzed my achievements, I realized that much of it were short lived and their value diminishes over time; some quickly and some take a longer time. So, I started reflecting on specific verses in the Noble Quran to get ideas for better life. Honestly it is humanly not possible (save for the Prophet pbuh) for a single person to encompass all the ideas of the Noble Quran. I have done a bit of it to the extent of taufeeq Allah bestowed upon me and in shall Allah will do more so long I will live. It

*is my wish that Allah accedes to my initiative and also gives me taufeeq to live these ideas in my life to earn His pleasure, blessings and get pardon.*

*Let me share these reflections with you all for the sake of spreading the ideas embedded in divine knowledge for making our lives truly profound.*

# The Airplane Syndrome

The Noble Quran

“The craving for ever greater worldly gains [and to compete with others in that regard] keeps you occupied; until you reach your graves.” [102:1-2]

While on a flight we barely realize that plane is moving until suddenly the staff announces to tie your belts as the plane is about to land. Those who were alert through the flight would minimize risk of being hurt, others who had been sleeping are likely to wake-up as the plane would touch ground and might get hurt, for they lost time to prepare to land safely.

In these verses Allah warns us of losing sight of the next life hence fail to prepare for it, as we continue to indulge in the adornments of this life yet we shall embrace the next life inevitably but rather with regret.

Flight is a perfect parable of our lives: The immediate chores and achievements of our lives eclipse our faith that this life shall come to an end and we shall move to another life in another world. So, we fail to notice that we are in a transition from this life to the next one until we come close to our death hence ignore to prepare for it. In the Noble Quran, Allah has referred to it as “Ain ul Yaqeen”. Allah says in His words, “When Pharaoh was drowned and could see his death with his eyes it was already too late for him to repent”. These are the ones who either deny the next life or proclaim to believe in it but may fall prey to complacency that the next life will be good anyways.

We often unconsciously commit such mistakes in our lives too. We let go the opportunities unnoticed that come in our lives, relationships and careers. For instance; spoilt brats feel complacent to work harder for their future not realizing that future shall be different; siblings do not recognize the preciousness of being together over their individual priorities what to talk about the pleasure of frequent re-union in their adult hoods until they part away and lose each other forever; in



our careers we focus on increasing money value of our current jobs but ignore to pursue meaningful career development, unconsciously denying that we would need different skill set to have a job in future. Examples abound! All because we lack conviction that tomorrow is going to be different: the rich may not be so, time and distance in the future shall not allow togetherness and change in the paradigm would be necessary to remain employed.

The metaphor “Seeing-is-Believing” is a trap of living in denial that leads to nowhere, as there shall be no time to prepare to embrace the reality successfully when it already begins to unravel. Just like a student beginning to study for the exam only after reaching in the examination hall! Knowing the future but being complacent about it is another form of denial. “Positive Thinking” i.e. believing that all is well too is a manifestation of complacency. All this leads to nowhere.

Success on the contrary depends upon accepting the situation realistically and moving forward with true knowledge. In the Noble Quran Allah has referred to these as “Haq ul Yaqeen” and “Ilm ul Yaqeen” respectively. In short, accepting with conviction that Allah is the one and only creator, sustainer and master of the day-of-judgment [i.e. monotheism]; life hereafter; following His Prophets and His revelations with unconditional faith; last but not the least, organizing our lives around Haq ul Yaqeen and Ilm ul Yaqeen while practicing the same principles in daily life. Continue doing this until death to enter the next life well prepared.

May Allah guide us and enable us to have Haq ul Yaqeen and Ilm ul Yaqeen, all the way through!



# Road to Happiness

The Noble Quran

So that the hearts of those who do not believe in the Life to Come might incline towards this attractive delusion, and that they may be well pleased with it and might acquire the evils that they are bent on acquiring. (6:113)

*Happiness is a sensation which requires no rational or ethical basis. It is an observed fact that we do well when we enjoy doing it, no matter if it is good or bad, real or fake, right or wrong, etc. Hence for many of us "Happiness" is the most crucial motivation of all in attaining excellence in our endeavors. Ironically everyone wants to walk on the "Road to Happiness" but ignore that they may lose sight of their up-north destination!*

*We actively seek happiness and in doing so often times our rationality and moral compass are eclipsed so much so that happiness becomes the end in itself. Quranic Sura 6, verse 113 explains it in verbatim. It tells us that while we focus on the adornments of this life, we lose sight of the next life in our endeavors. Sadly, attraction of this life becomes a curse of rejecting the next life.*

*What makes us happy does not necessarily mean that we get closer to our destination. Take an example of a continuing university student. Somehow the student seeks happiness in socializing with his class mates. So, he might end up socializing for most of the time and compromise on his studies. Obviously, in the finals he would not be prepared to take the exam well. Similar examples abound in our work and personal lives. For example, organizations legitimately enough demand from their employees on-the-job performance; productivity; and, profits. But what if the employee finds happiness in helping his colleagues complete their jobs rather than completing his own tasks, would he then not compromise his own targets for helping others and can his performance be productive? Obviously not! Similarly, if an employee finds happiness in being friendlier with the customers but doesn't serve or deliver to them what they need, would customers go back as "Satisfied" customers? Heaps of examples of social habits also abound, which we simply practice for seeking happiness rather than conducting oneself rationally. Extravagancy, show-off, pride and of all stalking and ridiculing others only for self-gratification are a few every day examples. In the cited*

examples, I wished to drive my readers to the point that as happiness becomes the end we begin to focus on illusions and fake achievements as success. Denial is bliss!

A moral compass (Taqwah) is our inner conscience that tells us what is okay and what is not. Hence, it disciplines us in choosing our actions. As we pursue happiness meaning do things that make us happy, it virtually hijacks our moral compass. It is only the happiness that becomes the deciding factor in choosing what to do and what not to do. Interestingly, when our moral compass controls our actions then surely we get happiness only by doing right actions and feel guilt by doing wrong. Nevertheless, as the urge for happiness gets more urgent our moral compass is automatically hijacked. In this situation we begin to seek happiness without letting our moral compass interfere and we possibly behave amorally, unethically and impulsively. Examples abound. Such as earning money illegitimately, exploiting people and resources, alcoholism or intoxication of any sort, terrorism, activities of self-destruction, gossiping and stalking others and strangely music and vulgarity are a few common manifestations.

So long “Happiness” is pursued within the bounds of rationality and moral compass it is a positive characteristic. Nevertheless, when “Happiness” becomes a standalone factor it deceives rationality and morality.



## When We Don't Value, We Fail to Act

Noble Quran

Allah says: They do not value Allah (their Lord) as He should be valued, when they say, "Allah did not reveal anything to any human being." Say, "Who revealed the Scripture which Moses brought—a light and guidance for humanity?" You put it on scrolls, displaying them, yet concealing much. And you were taught what you did not know—neither you, nor your ancestors. Say, "Allah;" then leave them toying away in their speculation. [6:91]

*This verse tells us that our advantages turn into tribulations when we fail to value such for whatever reasons may be. Particularly it is guidance and opportunities bestowed from Allah and generally achievements we attain in this world.*

*As we fail to value the guide and the guidance, we are bound to jeopardize our future by foregoing the possibilities and ignoring the risks that await us in the future life.*

*Likewise, dissatisfaction is considered positive in our lives: consumers to buy newer products, employees to switch jobs, individuals to change friendships, etc. rather for the sheer sake of change. Nevertheless, the satisfaction they attain by the change quickly fades away and they move on to the next target. Consequently, our personality characteristics like contentment; stability; dependability and thankfulness are either distorted or discarded all together in the given paradigm. At the core of dissatisfaction is "not valuing" what one has rather running after a moving target that is never hit. Interestingly enough, however, the personality characteristics referred to above are the foundation for building a successful future.*

*The crux is we need to acknowledge Allah with all his oneness and unparalleled powers, and other fellow human beings for their bestowed wisdom before we could value their guidance, favors and support. Subsequently, we need to cherish and rightly avail what we have been given before we move on to the next. The foremost of all human being we must value is our "Parents" and their favors unto us.*



## Life is All About Sacrifices

Al Quran

“Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah, so they kill and are killed. [It is] a true promise [binding] upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah? So, rejoice in your transaction which you have contracted. And it is that which is the great attainment.” [9:111]

*Our life is founded on give and take principle. In other words, our rights come with obligations to Allah; fellow human beings (including parents and siblings); and, the society. Likewise, employees' have obligations to their employers and enterprises have obligations to their customers before they could proclaim their rights onto them.*

*In the cited verse Allah is referring to those who envision life hereafter. They are the ones who sacrifice in the path of Allah their present opportunities, pleasures, wealth and even lives for the comforts and bounties of paradise, which Allah has promised to them in return – Life is all about sacrifices!*

*Sacrifices are equally needed to succeed in this life. We need to sacrifice our immediate needs and desires of lesser value for the more critical ones in the future. Yet those who fail to harness their impulse and don't let go their immediate needs or desires eventually sacrifice more critical opportunities in future. Examples abound!*

*A young intelligent person having all the access to education may prefer to indulge in luxuries and comfort at the cost of lost career in the future. A businessperson refuses to give discount when he can, does so only to lose repeat business opportunity. A person prefers to lead extravagant life style and fails to save for his retirement. An employee frequently switches jobs for trivial gain (greed) fails to secure his image as reliable employee in the future. In short, when we fail to sacrifice our today (bear hardship); we are bound to lose our opportunities in the future. In Quran Allah says in verse 94:5-6, “For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease. Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease.”*



# Leading from Inside-Out

The Noble Quran

You are the best nation [people] raised [and made responsible] for [the guidance and reform of] mankind.  
You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. (3:110)

*In the cited verse of the Noble Quran, Allah commands us to stay on the right path and lead others on it too. Precisely He wants us to lead ourselves and others by following the right path and guiding others on it; and, refraining ourselves from wrong doings and discouraging others from it too. Last but not the least, Allah tells us to lead with wisdom [Hikmat] and rationality.*

*The essence of above is that “Leading” begins from inside-out. We must lead ourselves first before attempting to lead others. Unlike managing for a common goal [results], leading is about harnessing oneself and others on the right path. Leading oneself and others is a religious, moral, social and organizational responsibility. Nations who adhered to this responsibility had turned into most prosperous ones of their times. On the contrary who had ignored it lost their sovereignty. Examples abound.*

*At stage one, leading is to develop belief [internalize] what is right and what is wrong and then living the belief 100%. Doing so one should demonstrate a credible and exemplary personality – for example, Prophet Muhammad pbuh who was equally respected by his disciples as well as others for his principles. Attaining such an empowerment on one hand is a sign of self-discipline and on the other hand qualifies the person to lead others.*

*Besides one's credibility, leading requires wisdom and rationality. People have values, intellect and assumptions based on which they develop some sort of rationality [or consonance] of their behaviors i.e. beliefs, decisions and actions. Leading necessarily requires encouraging right behaviors and reforming wrong.*



Unlike a misnomer that single approach can reform wrong and encourage right behaviors, one has to look at the principles of reward and punishment Allah has prescribed. What we learn from this is that to encourage and reinforce right behaviors Allah promises rewards, while for reforming wrong behaviors Allah warns of harshest punishments. Besides, Allah also provides rationality to His guidance by explaining the purpose. For example, Allah says to perform prayers so that you may be protected from wrong and vulgarity. Likewise, He says to fast so that you attain [taqwah] discipline. So, on and so forth. We obviously need to follow these principles in verbatim before attempting to lead.

Leading others requires authority over them. This authority has multiple manifestations to apply in different situations. To begin with, use relationship-based authority to inspire by role modeling and guiding. Going further, use intellectual authority to educate them. Lastly, use authority to make rules then implement them with rewards and punishments. Beware! Leading without wisdom and rationality would create ego centric personalities and rhetorical values leading to nowhere beyond ritualistic discipline.

Remember we all are led in one situation and lead in another. As parents; elders; teachers; managers; and seniors etc. we need to wear "Leadership" hat and not that of a manager or superior to build a nation of better people.



## Beating Stress

Noble Quran

“O soul that at peace! Return to your Rub well pleased (with your blissful destination), well pleasing (to your Rub). So, enter among My servants and enter My Paradise.” [89:27-30]

*Stress, anxiety, depression is prevalent in modern life and for many it seems inevitable and uncontrollable. Though, it badly affects our emotions, feelings, physical health, relationships and performance hence warrants prevention and control.*

*Allah tells us sufferings that we face in our lives are because of our own behaviors. In the cited divine verse, we learn that we get peace (and would succeed) as we attain agreement with what Allah has given to us (or even what He has taken back). Allah is the one whom we ask for power to struggle (taufeeq) and He is the one who gives the reward by His wisdom. Allah says there may be a thing (reward from Allah) that you may dislike but it may be good for you. For example, I wanted promotion badly but it was declined to me. I would surely feel bad about it but then it might become basis for me to move out and start my own enterprise – build a life time fortune. Such examples abound. Likewise, there may be a thing that Allah may not give, which I may want but it may not be good for me in the eyes of Allah. For example, it may be possible that if I get extra money I may indulge in extravagancy or do something devilish with that money and be cursed.*

*In this life we have choices how we live. Stress, anxiety and depression are the costs that we pay when we chose to live in disagreement with our situation. We constantly disapprove people, things and happenings in our lives. The disapproval, however, has its basis in our attitude rather than anything real. We also experience stress, anxiety and depression when we feel motivated by our desires. Desires are different from needs, for the former are manifestations of impulse and greed that we pretend as our needs. Needs on the other side are real ones. A pair of shoes is a real need but to have many pairs of shoes is a desire.*

*Needs are rational and have limits but desires are impulsive and there is no end to it. Allah says those who follow their desires are the companions of Satan.*

*We need to live with gratitude to Allah and then to people; attain agreement with our situation (Qadr); and, contentment on the necessities by focusing on real needs and saying no to the desires. Doing so In Shaa Allah we can surely beat the stress in all of its manifestations. In short, in this life we need to focus on finding peace by pleasing Allah (obeying Him) instead of seeking synthetic gratification.*

*Remember Allah may not question us how much money we earned or how much luxuries we lived in, He shall ask us if we lived by his guidance (obeyed Him) and sought his pleasure. Success lies in the later.*



# Turn Tribulations into Opportunities

Noble Quran

“And seek help through saba’ar [hope that future is going to be better] and salah [submission to Allah], and indeed, it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allah].” [2:45]

We all know that pinch of unforeseen difficulties and tribulations are part of everyone's life. Those who embrace it courageously are the ones who are able to carry on for a successful future. Ones who get despondent of these are never able to continue their struggle and lose all the opportunities that lie ahead. Once, a successful entrepreneur said that it is important to bear the start-up losses in anticipation of a better future. Without such hope one cannot reap the potentials of his business. Similarly, a newly recruited employee must embrace the hardship of demanding job situation in order to qualify for a prosperous career ahead. Examples abound.

In the cited verse of the Noble Quran, Allah is guiding the mankind to embrace the tribulations with saba'ar [keep their hope from Allah that [only] He shall make the future better] and do salah [ask for His support to make right efforts and His approval of it to secure the desired outcome]. Unconditional submission to Allah as our “Rab” is a must to do saba'ar and salah.

It is clear in the above verse that to turn tribulations into opportunities we need to keep hope and seek help from Allah [alone]. The two are mandatory: we cannot turn our tribulations into opportunities by simply keeping hope but do no efforts. Likewise, we cannot get the conviction in our efforts unless we keep hope from Allah. The former type of people is wishful thinkers who are bound to fall flat in their lives. Latter type are the proclaimed self-made but in fact they know not had Allah not supported them they would not have accomplished what they have done so. In short, they turn arrogant and developed disbelief (self-confidence). Qarun is an example for all such disbelievers. [Once] he said, “I was only given it because of knowledge I have.” Did he not know that Allah had destroyed before him of

*generations those who were greater than him in power and greater in accumulation [of wealth]? But the criminals, about their sins, will not be asked. [28:78]. And We caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And there was for him no company to aid him other than Allah, nor was he of those who [could] defend themselves. [28:81]*



## Chase Not, Embrace!

### The Noble Quran

And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him a way out. And will provide for him (provision) from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allah – then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Allah has already set for everything a [decreed] extent. [85:2-3]

*Chasing opportunities is inevitable to make our dreams come true; become rich; and last but not the least, get all that we desire in our lives – it aptly describes our attitude of competing for more. It is also considered the solution to escape from poverty. Nevertheless, this paradigm is in conflict with what Allah tells us in His noble Quran, “He teaches us that if we follow His guidance of halal and haram; right and wrong; and, doubt not our faith on Him that He is our savior and dispenser then He shall provide our provision from sources unknown to us. If we don’t, we would only end up chasing opportunities (our desires) impatiently but for no extra advantage – we would still get what He gives.*

*Let’s analyze where we go wrong! Individuals operating with a competing attitude are likely to deviate from their principles; engage in work politics; focus on destroying others instead of improving themselves; etc. We rationalize it telling to ourselves that we are ought to do it this way for everyone else is doing it. Soon we become intoxicated for more and follow the path blindly. In Sura Takasur, Allah says, “Their desire for more distracted them, until they reach to their graves.” The reality, however, is no matter how aggressively we chase opportunities (desires) we would still get what Allah has decreed for us.*

*Businesses too fall prey to this chasing syndrome. Every business spends millions of money on increasing their profits often relying on fictitious, deceptive and misleading promotion of their services or products. They don’t stop here but also spend money on destroying competitors’ products or sometimes create cartels*



among the competitors. All this destroys value-for-money for the customers, for they pay not for the product quality but for their perception wrongly influenced by the sellers. Yet ironically it is not that any of the competitors defeats others and takes over the entire customers: most factually everyone gets his share what Allah has already decreed for each of them. Therefore, it is much rational for businesses to focus on increasing customers' value-for-money by understanding their needs and expectations and trying to serve them honestly.

As individuals and businesses stop chasing and start embracing their opportunities, they are likely to be more principle centered and content, while they would still have opportunities that are decreed for them – nothing more, nothing less. Allah says, “If Allah should aid you, no one can overcome you; but if He should forsake you, who is there that can aid you after Him? And upon Allah let the believers rely.” [3:160]. Having explored the reality, we need to embrace our opportunities with patience, perseverance and gratitude – time to pause and ponder!



## Compete to Doom, Cooperate to Rise and Shine

Noble Quran

[ Allah ] said, "What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?" [Satan] said, "I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay." [7:12] [Satan] said, "Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path. [7:16]

How often do we not deny rights to someone just because we proclaim being superior as we live with a competing mind? Competing mind works with a scarce mentality and tries killing others with an arrogant attitude so as to maximize his self-gratification or to be more precise greed, for he thinks if others would survive he would lose – a win lose belief. We protect ourselves by proclaiming superiority in so many ways. Such as we hail from a different family, culture, race, ethnic background, we speak foreign languages he can't, we have money he does not, last but not the least we have authority to rule he follows. Thus, we declare we have rights on him, he has no rights on us; we know everything he knows not and doing so we legitimately or otherwise deprive him of his rights only to maximize our rights

In the cited verse from the Noble Quran, Allah Has spoken of this competing attitude of Satan. He enjoyed a higher status in the Heavens by the will of Allah, however, as he saw the creation of human race, Prophet Adam being the first, his competing mind compelled him not to accept and give respect to him even though it was Allah's order and wish. Later to justify his arrogance or to hide his guilt, he falsely blamed Allah Subhana-o-Tala for not letting him obey only to insist upon his arrogance instead of repenting and seeking pardon from Allah.

Ironically, to secure maximum worldly success in the modern world it is rather a commendable competence to compete and win over others. Such behaviors are clearly visible in social life where we often try to look down at others and belittle them – ridiculing and backbiting are most common manifestations of this; likewise, indulging in office politics at the expense of work productivity and controlling most of the organizational authority is especially meant to compete with fellow employees

*for a speedier career path – assassinating professional image and relationships of fellow employees, constraining and sometimes destroying performances of the fellow employees, unjustly holding back the benefits of others and last but not the least lack of cooperation at work are a few common manifestations of competing at work.*

*Competing attitude stems from incompetence, fear of losing and greed. It manifests in arrogance (pride), disapproval and restricting others to succeed. On the contrary, cooperation stems from confidence, abundance mentality and readiness to give space to others for coexistence. The former is “Satanic” which eventually leads to failure and latter is righteous, which paves the way to sustainable success for all.*



## Living with Gratitude

Noble Quran

So, which of the favors of your Lord would you deny? [55:13]

*In the cited verse of Noble Quran, Allah reminds us to take heed of the blessings He has showered on us, but unfortunately we keep denying only for our own loss: There were these friends. They grew up together, went to same school had always been together yet both had lived with a different attitude. Both were not so well off but one raised his family well; got his kids educated; and, lived his life with contentment. The other lived his life cursing himself his situation and people for his condition. He resonated frustration in his family. His kids never completed schooling and had no careers. In short, their life became even worse over time.*

*Those who deny the value of people, possessions and opportunities in their lives, however small or big, their relationships often break; jobs are lost; opportunities are missed; and of all, contentment is turned into frustration. These are the people who develop the attitude of thanklessness and ungratefulness. They focus on what they don't have and value not what they have. A person might feel frustrated because his family is poor. In that frustration he is likely to ignore the value of togetherness and love he has in his family, which so often is missing in today's fast-moving life. Now-a-days people curse themselves living in third world not realizing the advantages they have in their country – own culture, own people, own religion and so much more. Many envy the visible achievements of self-employed people and keep cursing on their careers, however, satisfying these may be. The end of all such persons is worse: not getting what they envy and losing what they had.*

*We all must struggle to improve, but when we start looking down at our present and past we might think we can make our future better but the reality is that frustration reduces our energy to struggle – we might try the short cut to get what we want but for sure we can't progress the right way with a burden of*

*frustration. The divine advice is to always cherish your present and past, it will give you the energy, confidence, patience and perseverance to attain more in life – let the Noble Quran and the life examples of the last Prophet (PBUH) be our mentor for a successful life ahead in this world and the next.*



## When Desires Hijack Us

Noble Quran

“But if they do not respond to you - then know that they only follow their [own] desires. And who is more astray than one who follows his desire without guidance from Allah? Indeed, Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people” [28-50]

Prophet Ibrahim ؑ lived his earlier life in deep desire to worship the true Lord of the universe and he kept struggling in search of Him. Our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ also spent his earlier life in search of the true Lord. Alhamdulillah, they both were truly guided in response to their pure desires. Allah says, “Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves [desires].” [Al Quran 13:11].

Desires, Desires and Desires! It makes us wake up in the morning with a poised attitude; it gives us pleasure of working through the day; it prepares us for walking an extra mile when the going gets tough; last but not the least, it make us do sustained struggle and achieve more in life. If there were no desires, we would not have had struggled in our lives beyond the call of nature.

When we get passionate about our purpose it turns into powerful desire and gives meaning and directions to our pursuits in life. Nevertheless, sometimes our desires determine our purpose in life. Some live for a purpose and others are controlled by their desires. The former types of people are rational towards their attitude and behavior are hardwired and difficult to be manipulated, while the latter types of people are dominated by impulsive attitude and behaviors and are easy to be controlled by others.

Our desires can be pure and constructive or impure and destructive. In other words, desires can be impure, dodging and misleading. Such are the desires that outburst spontaneously. Often it is our desire to enjoy and live for personal gratification ignoring the tribulations that will follow. For example, we make



decisions that are not so pleasant or ethical yet we do out of impulse; we buy things we don't need but just because it appeals to us so much or the sales person triggers our impulse. In such a situation, we use our brains to distort our rationality and moral compass to justify our desires. In other words we block our cognition – listen not to our inner conscience or external wisdom. Sometimes it happens at the unconscious level and sometimes we do this knowingly. The former is an attitude of ignorance and the latter is of insistence.

Allah the All Mighty and Merciful in the above verse of Noble Quran informed His Prophet ﷺ the reason so many people are not accepting the true message of Quran is because their impure desires to secure their self-proclaimed status or freedom have overpowered them. In the Quran Allah quotes the words of Pharaoh when Prophet Moses ﷺ conveyed to him Allah's invitation into Islam, "He said to his people that he (Moses) wants you to leave your Gods, so listen (accept) not to him".

Every day we all fall prey to our impure desires only to disguise our tribulations that will follow. For example, we make impulsive decisions to build new relations and break the old ones, comforting ourselves by telling it is our choice; we listen not to our parents' advices only to proclaim freedom from them much before time comes; we compromise our family, our religion (morals), our fun time, our health and last but not the least our eternal fate just to follow our impulse; we live unnecessarily extra lavish and comfortable life; we keep following the crowd blindly only for a desire to be accepted by the modern society; we spend extra money on brands only for a false desire to look better; we often insist on extravagancy for our shallow desire to keep our rhetorical traditions and customs; so on and so forth. In short, we live with an attitude of ignorance and insistence only to follow our impulse [desires].

Sadly our society, especially businesses, promote and leverage our desires for material wellbeing only for their gratification – selling more and more for profit – by compelling the consumer (us) to be slaves of our desires and bear the tribulations

*in the form of self-imposed stress; compromised humane values and morals; less quality time with family and friends; and risking the fate of eternal life. In the Quran Allah warns that those who follow their (impure) desires are the companions of Satan. May Allah save us from being hijacked by our impure desires and save us from the tribulations that follow!*



## Power of Reflection

The Noble Quran

He has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and the earth, all being from Him.  
Verily there are Signs in this for those who reflect. (45:13)

In the referenced verse, Allah ST guides us to strengthen our faith on Him being our creator and savior [Rab] by reflecting on the signs of His creations and favors unto us. Stronger our faith, better we shall understand the purpose of this universe; meaning of our life in this universe; and, the underlying reasons of righteous life style – the right and the wrong.

We have this age-old belief, “Ignorance is a bliss”. But the law says, “Ignorance is no excuse”. Those who know and those who don't know cannot be equal: Both can't spot the opportunities; take heed of the challenges; make good decisions; successful in their life and career; last but not the least thankful to his or her savior, equally well. Put it differently, one who is aware of his opportunities and challenges is better prepared and positioned to set his directions right and take advantage of the opportunities that come in his way. For example, a young boy or a young girl who reflects on his or her purpose of life realistically will be better prepared to set right directions in life and know which opportunity to take and which not, thus optimizing his or her chances of success. Likewise, one who recognizes Allah's and others' favors on him sincerely, he or she is then better prepared to continue earning favors unlike the one who ignores the favors unto him and earn the anger instead. Those who reflect on their situations with an open mind are better positioned to make good decisions unlike those who make decisions on their desires and assumptions. In short those who reflect are the ones who believe in truth and live with optimism, while those who do not reflect are the ones whose lives are driven by their fantastic desires and assumptions.

We can better appreciate the implication of reflecting in the context of evolving change for better. We talk a lot about improvement but we seldom change. In the Noble Quran, Allah says in Surah Al-Ra'd 13:11: Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves – assumptions, values, desires, etc. Improvement depends on acting with understanding and accepting then correcting the wrong beliefs and practices, however deep rooted in our lives and culture these may be. Reflecting is a process that allows us to ponder, realize and differentiate between what is right and what is wrong. It makes our views and beliefs more rational and objective.

Sadly, wrong we do when we perform virtuous actions without caring to understand the spirit of these. It catalyzes no improvement in our lives, whatsoever. Such as one would pray all the obligatory salat yet understand not what he is uttering: His salat might not bring any change in his faith or actions (Allah knows better). There is a famous analogy to this: A world leader being victim of “Islamophobia” once happened to go to a Muslim Seminary. To his utter fear he saw hundreds of children reciting Quran e Hakeem. He asked do they understand what they are reading. Unfortunately, he got the answer in negative: It was the moment of relief for him. Even worse is the situation where we live our lives with so much of contentment as if we do no wrong, be it living with a shallow belief (assumption); acting without understanding; ignorance; complacency; last but not the least, following our impure desires and sometimes the crowd blindfolded. We have basis to say that all this makes our lives superficial and irrational so much so that we become stubborn and fail to accept facts hence change.

Let us elaborate the implications of not reflecting by citing a few situations that are usually prevalent in our society. Most pertinently, as students we are supposed to develop analytical and pragmatic view of the world. However, as we fail to reflect on the theory taught to us, we end up memorizing it without understanding. Furthermore, we pay no heed to our ignorance of however small yet wrong social behavior, such as; false pride, not treating someone equal, disrespecting

others, keeping bias, and the most of all making false accusations. If we reflect once why we are doing this, I am sure we can improve upon our wrong doings. On the extreme side, we sometimes get indulged in serious violations, for instance corrupting the society by bribing for our illegitimate actions without thinking for a moment what wrong we are doing. A gulf of variants of wrong actions that we do day-in day-out prevail in our society, but we fail to recognize them as something wrong. Why? It is so because we have stopped reflecting on the ill-fated outcomes and more importantly our actions, particularly unconscious and deliberate mistakes. As a consequence, there has been a constant downward slide in our society. If we once reflect on our assumptions, desires and actions, I am sure we can improve by the Will and Taufeeq of Allah.

On the contrary, a cognizant-society is one where individuals reflect for better understanding and to try correcting themselves. The following example might explain it all, "A man once took his young daughter to a famous departmental store to do some groceries. While he was busy picking up the groceries his daughter started to wander around the store. Suddenly he heard his daughter crying. As he went to her, he found that another lady customer mistakenly hit his daughter with the cart. So, he went to the lady customer and asked her to say, sorry" to the girl. She excused and explained that it was a mistake so she needs not to say sorry. But the man kept insisting so much so that the store manager had to intervene. Finally, the lady had to say sorry. Having done so, she asked the man why he was insisting so much. He explained that if today [you] had not said sorry to my daughter she would never have had learned to say sorry to others. The moral is: Reflect and respond.

To start with let us develop this habit of reflecting on the wisdom of Quran e Hakeem followed by critically reflecting on our personal beliefs, professional pursuits and social conduct to build stronger faith on Allah and to improve quality of our life and the lives of others. May Allah be pleased with us and guide us on the path of ultimate success.

## Our Possessions are the Signs of Allah

Noble Quran

Say, "O Allah, Owner of Sovereignty, You give command to whom You will and You take command away from whom You will. You give respect whom You will and You take respect away from whom You will. In Your hand is [all] good. Indeed, You are over all things competent. 3:26

*Some children are born with a silver spoon. They are the ones who live with free choices; gain high respect in the society; and, command over others. At the same time, we find some other people having not much to make choices in their lives; are not respected in the society; and, sometimes live their lives under someone else's authority. Yet both are equal human beings having equal rights.*

*Naively, however, we tag the persons born with a silver spoon among the blessed ones, while the persons who face tribulations in their lives are supposedly among the ones who are cursed upon for no obvious reason. This perception usually leads to multiple social evils, most importantly divide and rivalry among "Haves" and "Have-nots".*

*In cited verse of the Noble Quran, Allah has clarified point blank that such differences among people do not make the Haves superior than Have-nots. Allah the exalted says it is His will (wisdom) by which He gives more to some people and less to others. In short, such differences are the "signs" of Allah. He has absolute authority to do what He wills. We need to understand the divine wisdom to attain agreement and contentment.*

*The shortest and authentic explanation to these differences is given in Sura Mulk, verse 2. In that Allah says, "Allah has created death and life to see who does righteous deeds". This follows that whatever a man possesses or is deprived of in this life is neither reward nor punishment but with it Allah tests the people if they act thankfully i.e. obey Allah as it is incumbent and befitting, whether they are given affluence or being deprived of even basic needs. Allah knows what is best to test a person. There is a lesson in the story of Qarun, narrated in the Noble Quran. "Then*



he came out of his people in his adornment those who desire the life of the world said, 'anyhow, we would too had the like of that Qarun has been given, undoubtedly he has a great fortune? And those who were given knowledge said, 'woe to you', Allah's reward is better for him who believes and does good work, and it (Allah's reward) is given only to those who are patient. Then We caused him and his home to sink into the earth, and he had no party with him that it may help him to save against Allah, and nor he could take revenge. And in the morning those who had longed (for) his position the day before began to say, 'it is strange' Allah increases the provision for whosoever of His bondmen He pleases and straitens (for whomsoever He pleases), if Allah had not been gracious to us, we too had been caused to sink. Ah', there is no good for disbelievers''.

Allah tests all of us day-in day-out by giving us affluence and authority over others or by restraining its provision, as He thinks fit for us. A person who is given affluence and authority over others receives it as a trustee, and will be judged (questioned) how he or she used the provisions and authority, entrusted upon him or her: Whether he or she consumed it justly (in obedience of Allah) and did not transgress (used his provision and authority for his impure desires)? Similarly, a person is deprived of the provision and put under someone else's authority shall be judged if he or she had acted patiently (hoped for Allah's reward later).

Unfortunately, we the proclaimed Muslims act no differently from others in consuming our provision and using our authority for personal gratification rather than to obey Allah. For instance, most of us spend money entrusted upon us rather extravagantly on our luxuries and comforts instead of spending it to obey Allah. We often abuse authority entrusted upon us for personal gratification and gain rather than holistically for everyone's advantage. For instance, a business owner (a personal or business advantage and forgets about the rights of the employees and customers. Similar contradictions exist in our social lives.

*In short, we are guided by the Noble Quran, “And We tested them with prosperity [affluence and authority] and with adversity [tribulation] that perhaps they would return [to obedience]” [7:168]. Meaning abundance of provision and authority or lack of it is a condition (Sign) designed by Allah to test us as to who shall obey Him and who would not: Seek Allah’s rewards and direct his or her pursuits for averting Allah’s punishment in this life and on the day-of-judgment, which is inevitable. May Allah guide us and empower us on the righteous path.*



## When We Take Pride in Ourselves!

Noble Quran

(O Musa) Go to Firawn; he has rebelled. And say to him Have you any liking to purify yourself? And that I should guide you to your Lord so that you may fear Him. Then Musa showed him a great sign. But he belied him and disobeyed. [79:16-22]

The captioned verse is referenced from Sura An-Nazi'at. As we can read, Allah explains the behavior of a rebellious, one who develops false self-belief or pride in himself. Such a person never listens to the wise nor corrects himself, for he thinks none is better than him. Here Allah has given the example of Firawn [Pharaoh], who had developed false self-belief or pride and did not listen to the advice of the Prophet Musa pbuh and was eventually drowned.

Often, we witness that a person achieves exponential advancement in his life and career but ends up making crucial mistakes that pull him down one day. There was this example of a renowned engineer. He once became stranded on a high-way as his car dragged into the dessert when one of wheels got detached from his car. He started looking for the loosen nuts so he could fix the wheel again. Of course, it was next to impossible to find the loosen nuts, yet he kept looking for them. A lunatic person was passing by and stopped at this person to ask if he can help him. The engineer out of his pride looked at the person and said, "You are a crazy man, what can you do for me". The man left immediately but after a while on his way back from wherever he went, he came back. As he saw the man still looking for the nuts, he asked again. This time the man out of sheer frustration said, "Don't you see I am looking for the loosen nuts so I could fix my wheel." The other person instantly said, "Why don't you take out one nut from each of the remaining three wheels and fix the fourth wheel?" The engineer got excited and embarrassed too. He thanked him and let the person go. He then realized that had he listened to him earlier, he would have saved lot of time and hassle. But in fact, it was his pride in him that stopped him from listening and registering the suggestion.

*How often we all get into the trap of our pride. In short, we keep committing the mistakes that we had been doing in the past just because we don't accept that we can do wrong: If I had been doing it this way, I must be right and there can't be any better way to do it! I saw my father doing it this way, how can he be wrong! I have always succeeded doing it this way, how can I fail! If I don't do it this way, I will lose my advantage! I know what is right, none can tell me what to do! I am an adult and not answerable to anyone anymore! I have authority to do what I wish; none has the authority over me! These are some of the common manifestations of false pride that cause us to make mistakes and doom eventually.*

*As we shed off false our self-belief or pride, we begin to look at our mistakes; and, change for better thus averts all the negative fate ahead in our lives. Allah says, "Whatever affliction befalls you, it is because of what your hands have earned..." (Sura Ash-Shūrā 42:30). May Allah protect us from getting into this trap.*



## Kindness is the Mother of all Virtues

Noble Quran

Could the reward of kindness [righteousness] be anything but kindness [righteousness]? [55:60]

Kindness is a virtue that means being humane, compassionate, caring, gentle, benevolent, thoughtful, considerate, helpful, forgiving and sharing. We may act with kindness in as many ways as we can think of. For instance, talking to someone softly and with affection, and listening to him with empathy is a sign of kindness. Acknowledging someone's initiatives and efforts is kindness. Walking an extra mile to help someone is kindness. Serving a customer honestly and fairly is an act of kindness too. Sharing one's resources, knowledge and time with others is sheer kindness. Comforting a person in distress and grief is also being kind. Forgiving a person for a mistake is best of all the acts of kindness.

A person however independent he or she wishes to be is naturally interdependent with others from birth to death – time to ponder! It is up to each person to make his or her interdependence a blessing or a curse. When the two persons act with kindness they complement each other's lives. But if they work with aggressiveness and cruelty they usually mess up their lives. We all have a choice to live with kindness and glow our lives or live aggressively and fill our lives with hardship at the end.

Allah the only Exalted educates us in the above verse that the response to kindness is nothing but kindness. It can be interpreted from two perspectives. First, it means when we act with kindness towards others, they naturally respond back by acting with kindness to us. Second, it could be taken as an advice from Allah that we should respond back with similar or even bigger kindness to the acts of kindness that another person show towards us. In both perspectives, the message is that "Kindness" should prevail.

Benefits of kindness are infinite. For instance, if we show kindness to others purely for the sake of obeying Allah, we would in shaa Allah have Allah's blessings in this life and life hereafter. Besides, with consistent acts of kindness we have seen foes turning into friends and with cruelty friends turning into foes. As everyone would act with kindness, the world will become just and supportive.

Sadly, however, sometimes naively some of us consider others kindness onto us as their weakness or passiveness. On the flip side of it, some of us believe that if we act kindly the other person would take it as our weakness and would try to exploit us. So instead of acting with kindness we deliberately act aggressively. The outcome of such a relationship is that other person would automatically become aggressive with us too. Both would lose eventually! Instead, we should act with kindness having a conviction that by doing so Allah will turn our foe into friend or at least we will in shall Allah earn Allah's blessing in this life and life hereafter. At this point we need to remind to ourselves the Quranic verse that says, "If Allah afflicts you with a calamity, there is none to remove it but He Himself. Likewise, if He wills to bestow a favor on you, there is none to withhold His bounty". 10:107.

Remember, however, kindness is not which looks good but does more harm than help. For instance, parenting kids with a silver spoon i.e. affording him or her all the luxuries, getting all that kinds need without letting them earn on merit, giving charity to make someone habitual bagger, helping students with sure solutions not teaching concepts, siding the oppressor, giving bribe as a token of kindness, getting things through extortion (illegally and immorally) and distributing as charity among the poor, last but not the least doing kindness for show-off.

May Allah guide us on His righteous path and make us kind to each other for a quality life ahead.



## Legacy beyond this Life

Noble Quran

Everyone upon the earth will perish; And there will remain the Face of your Lord, Owner of Majesty and Honor; So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny? [55:26, 27, 28]

*Inevitably we lose all that we accumulate at one point or another. Does it then sound rational to spend our entire life accumulating more and more at the cost of so much else we could do in the same time: Stay with parents, spend quality time with family, educate ourselves to get more enlightenment, live a stress free life, improve others' lives, last but not the least make the world even better. In short, we should live with a purpose and leave a legacy that shall keep us alive on Roll-of-Honor with All Mighty Allah and in the minds of people long after we die.*

*In the cited verse of Noble Quran, Allah the Exalted reminds us that this life shall come to end and so will be our accumulations and only Allah All Mighty shall remain. Who will then bring us back to our second life to reward (or punish) us for the legacy we left in the previous life. We should therefore thank him first for the opportunity of this life and then for reincarnating us to reap the fruits of our legacies in the next life.*

*No one is oblivious to the purpose of this life, but often we turn to more urgent and procrastinate on the distant reality. Many times, working hard for the urgent leaves no time to work for the distant and we come to the point of death. It happens so because we fail to take a rational view of our urgent pursuits so much so that sometimes the significance of distant reality fades out in our minds. So, we end up pursuing the urgent like real purpose: Earning money is surely a survival need but in reality, getting richer becomes the very purpose of living no matter at what cost one attains it. Personal security and wellbeing eclipse our ability to add value in others' lives – we compete instead of sharing our fortunes [blessings] with others. We go to schools but learn not instead we secure degrees to improve our*



employability – we are a generation who is more educated but less enlightened. We take pride in relations but fail to enrich each other – parents make all the efforts to give a comfortable life to their kids but fail to teach them virtues and habits of an enlightened person. Space and readers' time limit me to add more parables, although examples abound. So, I leave it to my readers to relate many more examples as they should have observed.

The moral is that it is about time to pause and ponder: Why we have been given this life and where we need to head before our time finishes.



## Partnering in Discipline

Noble Quran

The faithful, men and women, are companions (friends, helpers, supporters, protectors) of one another; they encourage (each other) Al-Ma'ruf and save (each other) from Al-Munkar. [9:71]

*We know but we pay no attention; we believe but practice not; we praise but follow not; we idealize to envy but conform not; we learn to unlearn; last but not the least, we discipline ourselves but enjoin not others. Worst are the ones who discipline others but fail to discipline themselves. Unless everyone does what is right and stay away from doing wrong, the harvest of “good” can never be felt equally by all.*

*In the cited verse, Allah is teaching us to develop the culture of encouraging or enabling discipline [Al-Ma'ruf] and saving or restraining from doing wrong [AlMunkar] among ourselves. This entails developing habit of disciplining ourselves, our next-of-kin, siblings, peers, and fellow humans. On the contrary, if everyone is set free to follow his or her impulse it would only lead to chaos, herd followership, and loss of control.*

*Let us take a look at a few manifestations of this in real life. Western society, which is considered full of freedom has its boundaries of permissible and not permissible actions, however, based on their political wisdom. Consequently, these societies live by a system and more importantly everyone together not only adheres to the social and civic norms of the society but also encourages others to do so. For instance, acting responsibly towards neighbors; showing patience standing in a queue; respecting others' privacy and self-esteem; following rules; etc. In Japan toddlers spend first few years in the school learning about values, norms and manners alone. Once there was this senior lady from the west going through immigration at the Kabul Airport, while I was also there in the immigration queue. Someone standing at the end of the queue offered her his position so she does not have to stand in the*

line for long and could get through quickly. To my utter surprise, she not only refused but showed her displeasure to that person and went to join the queue at the starting point. She said it is wrong! She not only refused to do what was wrong but left a great example for many of us to follow. It is time to reflect upon our habits. To what extent we follow right and could say no to doing wrong despite the advantages attached to it, and encourage others to do so? Paradoxically, we claim to subscribe to Allah's principles of right and wrong, yet we fail to put our faith in action in many situations. Examples abound. Again, time to introspect on our attitudes and habits.

The difference in the system and culture of the west and of us is poles apart. They have their rights protected most of the time, while we have to struggle for our rights all the time. In conclusion I would say with conviction, if we follow our faith in true spirits than we can emerge even better society. What are we waiting for; let us not procrastinate for tomorrow let us correct ourselves today for a better tomorrow and hereafter as well In Shaa Allah?

We just need to start reflecting on our inactions in particular and actions in general. Besides, we need to educate our juniors on these lines with similar commitment and conviction as we educate them for their careers.



## Success is Bestowed to Positive Minds

Noble Quran

Prophet Yaqoob (ﷺ) said this to his sons, "O my sons, go and find out about Yousuf (ﷺ) and his brother and despair not of relief (success) from Allah. Indeed, no one despairs of relief (success) from Allah except the disbelieving (polytheist & atheist) people." [12: 87]

*I can bet we all want to succeed; everyone should! All those who make efforts with a positive mind [i.e. unshaken faith] are the ones who are bestowed success. Thus, keeping faith and making consistent efforts is the key to success.*

*In the cited verse, Allah is harnessing our thinking that we can even do things which seem not just difficult but impossible too, if we keep our hope (faith) from Allah that He is all capable to bestow success to us, in the following conversation between Prophet Yaqoob (ﷺ) and his sons. Father is asking his sons to go look for his long-lost brother Prophet Yousuf (ﷺ) and Binyamin [Benjamin] although it looked impossible yet he advised to rely on Allah for success. He further warned that those who rely not on Allah for their success are the disbelievers and shall sooner or later feel despair [lose hope]. The moral is whether one works by accepting that success will be bestowed from Allah or simply relies on continuing to work and work, success is from Allah alone. [HE (Allah) has power over all things, Chap. 2, Verse 109, Noble Quran]*

*History is filled with stories of people who struggled, struggled and kept struggling for long with a faith before they embraced success. Talking about people after the Prophets, who succeeded in their apparently impossible pursuits include the leaders of Pakistan movement who surely struggled with an unshaken faith; Nelson Mandela who struggled for the rights of his fellow south Africans; Chinese leaders who turned China into a giant economy in no time; and so many who changed their lives from nothing to everything only for their unshaken faith [on Allah or themselves] and consistent struggle. Then why can't you and I succeed!*

Sure, recipe of success is: Unshaken faith that Allah bestows success to all those who make consistent efforts. Some who have faith on themselves instead, still work with this belief that they must keep working to succeed. The common among these two people is "Hope". Both work with the hope to succeed. However, one who keeps hope from Allah will be confident to succeed come what may and would continue struggling. Such are the persons who humble themselves [acknowledge thanks to Allah] when they succeed and feel content and wait for better tomorrow [do Sba'ar] when they fail asking Allah for his forgiveness. On the other hand, persons who keep hope on their own efforts quickly feel despair facing consistent challenges, hardships and small failures on the way and would consider it bad-luck only to withdraw. But when they get success it would only increase in their pride. In the Noble Quran Allah says, "When the victory of Allah has come and the conquest; and you see the people entering into the religion of Allah in multitudes; then exalt [Him] with praise of your Lord and ask forgiveness of Him. Indeed, He is ever Accepting of repentance." [Surah 110]

Success is not always how we envision it. Instead, Allah has described success in the Quran and revelations before it. To succeed we must strengthen our faith [Hope] on Allah and ask Allah to give us ability [taufeeq] to keep struggling no matter come what may. Remember, our destinies are not the verdict from Allah but His definite predictions of our intentions and action that we shall do in our lives, from birth to death. May Allah guide us on the right path and bestow success in this life and life hereafter.



## Mind Your Questions

Noble Quran

Allah says, "And We sent not before you, [O Muhammad], except men to whom We revealed [the message], so ask the people of the message if you do not know". [21:7] Allah says, "O you who have believed, do not ask about things which, if they are shown to you, will distress you". 5:101

*Knowing less was bliss but not anymore. Now ignorance is no more an excuse. If I step on another person unknowingly, I would still have to say sorry; if I didn't know the law, I would still be responsible if I break the law; if I didn't have the right information yet I make a decision, I would still be responsible if it goes wrong. In short, "knowing" and "understanding" is a necessity.*

*Beliefs are deep rooted assumptions that pass from generations to generations but are often not validated against evidence, because all those who believe follow it without questioning. Islam as well as scientific principles negate beliefs and emphasize on verifiable facts [faith]. Having said this, getting correct and complete information is a must to respond rightly. Questions are at the heart of information gathering, analyzing and understanding.*

*In the cited verses from Noble Quran Allah has guided us on two principles of questioning. The first principle is that if you don't know, and one can't know everything, so ask those who know it. In other words, do not assume [or follow a blind belief]. Second principle is that do not ask questions which if answered may distress you [or confuse you].*

*Were we born knowledgeable; we would not have to educate us. But in reality, learning is an evolutionary process. We all learn from each other and by experiencing. So, the first step in learning is to ask from the person who knows it. But if one assumes on his own then he is likely to be lost. For example, unless we go to a Doctor [expert] and follow his advice, we cannot get the cure. Whatever we may do at our own would be sheer assumption and will not cure.*

A prediction that he will fail in the exam or shall die in so much time is an example of distressing answers. Such information does no good to a person but surely make him despondent, lose hope, negative, less confident, etc. Perhaps it is this reason that Allah did not inform us when each of us will die, otherwise we would not live even for a day.

So, the moral is that while asking questions is must for learning and responding, we must mind our questions: Are we asking from the right person the right information? Will it do good for me? Do I really need this information? And, Am I asking information that is public, for I should not ask for information that is secret [confidential] or someone's personal; etc.





## Rationality is Righteousness

Noble Quran

And those who, when reminded of the verses of their Lord,  
do not fall upon them deaf and blind. [25:73]

There was a crowd hitting a man. A person passing through got concerned and asked the persons why they were hitting the man. Everyone said, I saw others hitting him so I also hit him. In short, no one had a clue what wrong did he do yet everyone started hitting him blindly. Likewise, we often meet strangers to judge them by their attire. Such actions are commonly found in almost all aspects of our lives. Let us look at why do we respond so and should we correct ourselves?

In the captioned verse from the Noble Quran Allah teaches us that if we interpret the verse either out of context or on the basis of our desires [how we wish to see it] then we are bound to go astray. Muslims apply their intelligence to understand the true spirit and implications of the verse, keeping in view its context and not letting their desires interfere their perception. Having said this, acting rationally is righteousness and maturity while acting spontaneously or impulsively is sinful and deceitful.

In the modern times, crowd wisdom; hearsay; trend following; and impulsive response prevail in the societies. Most of us have no time to ponder, instead we simply either accept or reject rather impulsively. Of course, in such situations our perception [understanding] is less informed and biased. Consequently, we act like programmable robots controlled by our surroundings. For instance, our values and norms are influenced by the crowd wisdom; our perception of other people is altered by the hearsay; our life style evolves by the trends; our buying choices are controlled by impulsive response to the best advertisement rather than by the best product. In short, our modern life is controlled by its attractive surrounding rather than informed and rational choices.

Apart from the attractiveness of the modern life, it demands many compromises. To start with, unconsciously our faith and beliefs are redefined to suit out life style. For instance, while acts of worship are designed to bring more discipline in behaviors, but often such are reduced to rituals only. For instance, Allah says, "Fasting is made compulsory upon you, so you develop piety". But it is unfortunate that we do not change our behaviors at all. Examples abound. Another cost of modern life is that we become too emotional at the cost of rational outlook. For example, we celebrate mother's/father's day much emotionally but often are too busy in our chores to take care of them through the year. In passing through our chores hurriedly we make half cooked decisions without pondering on their pluses and minuses and then after a while when such decisions fail then we make a counter decision. A recent scam of first allowing export of sugar then in a short while allowing to import sugar when the local supplies became short due to earlier decision to export is a glaring example of making decisions in haste. Some may consider it biased decision but I would rather not suspect on the integrity without knowing it.

May Allah guide us to live with rationality of faith, beliefs and actions and follow not our impulse and bias.



## Never fall prey to falsehood

Noble Quran

So they said, "Upon Allah do we rely. Our Lord, make us not [objects of] trial for the wrongdoing people.  
And save us by Your [Allah's] mercy from the disbelieving people." [10:85-86]

Although there may be many companies doing similar corruption, there is this company which is heavily indulged in financial corruption. They provide financial services to corporate clients. To get business they feel no shame in giving bribe to the key personnel of their clients. They say it is not possible to do business without giving bribe.

As a practice they hire young boys and girls with inadequate education and keep them under pressure. They force [more precisely motivate] these young employees into corrupt practices: they use them to give bribe or else in so many words they are told of dire consequences to their career. The young employees with inadequate education and no experience usually succumb to the employer's demands and eventually become corrupt only to get recognition and acknowledgement from the employer.

In the captioned verse of the Holy Quran, Allah is guiding us to seek His protection from becoming object of trial [fitna] for the wrongdoers, when they exploit, harass, humiliate and corrupt the weak for their advantage, quoting the example of Israelites who were subjected to all sorts of exploitation by the Pharaohs until Allah liberated them by sending Prophet Moses pbuh.

Modern life is full of excitement, glamour, comforts and pleasures. It is very difficult for anyone not to get indulged in it: Some are pushed into it to meet their ends and some come for excitement and fun. At the end, both transform into amoral and ready for being exploited by their employers but for personal gains. The beneficiaries are those who have resources and consider it their right to exploit the weak for their advantage though sugar coating it in the form of rewards.

The ultimate outcome is that employers use their employees and discard them for new ones entering in the market. Sadly, we see many examples of the situation around us. The one cited at the beginning reflects a real situation, many similar examples prevail. A few more are highlighted as follows:

- a. Modern concept of bonded labor is a true replica of slavery of the past, where the owner exploits the labor to his maximum advantage.
- b. Otherwise responsible employees of a company follow unethical practices to achieve their business targets. For example, in selling cigarettes they would not bother to promote smoking among under aged persons; offering illicit favors to customers to increase sales; and, making substandard products to save on cost for higher profits.
- c. Harassment of women in the work place is a common global problem. Indeed a shameful example of how young girls are exploited for their position.

At the end weak sells off his or her faith, beliefs, values, self-esteem and of all destinies in return for money, fame, glamour and comfort. Those who have had faced the similar situations better know the value of freedom to practice faith and maintain self-esteem; few would take lessons from others' experiences; and, many are likely to fall prey to the falsehood of modern life. Time to ponder if the sacrifice is worth taking!



## Response in Haste is Response in Vain

Noble Quran

O you who have faith, if there comes to you a wrongdoer [fasiq a known liar] [and may also include fajir one who violates rules] with an information [news], investigate, in case you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful. [49:6]

*Once reading a prank WhatsApp message which said someone has insulted Islam, the pious man instantly went out hunting for him and finally killed him. He was later told to his regrets that the victim did not insult Islam, it was just a prank: The victim cannot be brought back to life and the man has to live with regrets forever. An irreversible action with big cost for both!*

*In the captioned verse Allah is guiding us to always verify the news before responding, especially when someone unreliable brings it to you. There is always a risk that we hurt someone; break our relationships; and face negative consequences irreversibly by simply reacting in haste to fake news. At the end nothing but regrets remain.*

*In our social life grapevine, hearsay, and fabricated news all are common. Ironically, we have accepted all this as a norm of modern social life. We heedlessly forward posts on social media, convey gossips and hearsays as news without realizing that we are spreading false information, distorting beliefs and creating uncertainty or even chaos. So much so that it is now so difficult to separate facts from pranks. Consequently, we see relationships breaking; people acting irrationally; emotions overpowering informed judgments; chaos replacing certainty; doubts replacing convictions; last but not the least, faith [beliefs] are shaken.*

*At the root of all this is “We” and our “Attitude”. We as a society have become less conscious of our actions and live our lives with speed: Act now, no time to think, reflect and ponder. Attitude of excitement, fun and achievement has taken over our concern for truth, conscience, responsible actions and last but not the least patience.*

*In short today we look for more and live in virtual reality. This lovely saying of our past is totally reversed in modern life, “Do not walk through life so fast, you will forget to smell the flowers.”*

*Moral of today's life is we all live-in virtual reality filled with excitement, fun and fake achievements; we act irresponsibly because we care less of our actions; we build our relationships on suspicions; and, we proclaim faith without conviction. Put it simply, we are most vulnerable to unproven beliefs, gossips and hearsay, doubts, fake life style and above all we pose great opportunity for our opponents to come over power us socially, politically and economically. It is all because we no more double check the news that comes to us before acting upon it. Sadly, we are information deficit in today's information age!*



## Compartmentized Living

Noble Quran

O you who have faith, enter into Islam completely [and perfectly] and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy. [2:208]

Recipe of modern life lies in living with different values in personal, social and professional aspects. Put it simply, if what we value in our personal life conflicts with our professional or social pursuits we may choose to conduct our professional and social lives independent of our personal values and vice versa. In short, we should not let our personal values interfere with our professional or social values by keeping each aspect of our life independent of the other. Such is the mindset of a modern or hybrid-liberal person. Consider the hidden dichotomy amongst people who are conservative in their personal lives but by virtue of their professional motivation and social norms adopt to more liberal values in their professional or social lives. For example, a person may follow strict religious virtues in his personal life but let not it interfere with amoral practices in business or liberal social norms. Ironically, perhaps this has become general norm of our modern lives. Doing so, we manage different aspects of our life much conveniently but fail to attain lasting success.

In the captioned verse from the Noble Quran, Allah is telling us to [practice] entre into Islam in all aspects of life and follow not the footsteps of Shai'tan, who is a clear enemy of mankind – remember he refused to prostrate Adam pbuh, since then he envies the human race. At other places in Quran, Allah gave example of such people as those who accept [practice] on one aspect of Islam and reject [do not practice] other aspect of Islam. [So, do you believe in part of the Scripture and disbelieve in part? – 2:85, Noble Quran]. It follows that Allah does not approve practicing righteous values in one aspect of life and rejecting or ignoring the same in other aspects – act like a good Muslim in personal life but in social and professional lives follow not Islamic virtues in the letter and spirit.



Practicing different set of values in different aspects of life is what Stephen R. Covey termed in his book titled, "Principle Centered Leadership" as the art of compartmentizing personal, social and professional and spiritual aspects of life.

The question arises as to what encourages compartmentized living? The most apt answer is given in Quran. When a person takes his desires as important as obeying Allah then his professional values are bound to change. [Have you (not) seen he who has taken as his god his [own] desires, and Allah has sent him astray due to knowledge and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and put over his vision a veil? So, who will guide him after Allah? Then will you not be reminded? 45:23] More so, when a person makes his goal to please people instead of Allah, he succumbs to the social norms more than he should follow Allah's guidance. [Hadith 57, Whoever sought the pleasure of Allah though it was displeasing to the people then Allah becomes pleased with him, and will make the people pleased with him, and whoever sought the pleasure of the people though it was displeasing to Allah then Allah becomes displeased with him and will make the people displeased with him] (Ibn Hibban/Tirmidhi)

Examples abound of compartmentized life style in our society. While we have strong ideological bent towards Islam but our life style has borrowed quite a few practices from the liberal world. Most glaring are the conflicts between our typical Islamic values in our personal lives and capitalistic bent in our professional lives. For instance, we pray, fast, pay zakat, perform Hajj rather religiously but on the other side we seem to ignore our faith in our professional life. Such as; we pursue maximizing of wealth heedlessly, we cheat customers in as many ways as possible, and we exploit employees esp. women by using them for promoting our businesses. Ironically however, we dare not to follow same norms for our own siblings and daughters. We happily take up careers that are directly or indirectly in conflict with our faith such as; we work for interest-based institutions and stock exchanges, we own and conduct illicit trade, we bribe to earn more. Last but not the least, we keep our savings in interest earning accounts and we gamble (make speculative

investments in property and stocks), so on and so forth. We do all this only to maximize our earnings or wealth in this life.

On the social side, similar dichotomies abound. So often we fail to give others their rights, keep bias from others and mock them, lie in trivial to grave situations, stand up not as a witness to support the right-person, lead extravagant life-style despite preaching for simplicity, spend lavishly on occasions esp. marriages, so on and so forth.

Put it differently, we have casted different standards for our personal, social and professional lives. Alhamdulillah we are Muslims by faith but we are neocapitalists in our professional life and liberals in our social life. In real, we are a confused hybrid generation heading to nowhere!

May Allah grant us taufeeq to practice Islam in our holistic lives and be eligible for Allah's pardon and blessings in this world and on the Day-of-Judgment.



## Be Candid; Make Lives Prosperous

Noble Quran

O you who have faith, be persistently standing firm in justice, [give] witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is ever acquainted, with what you do. [4:135]

*We lie; do gossips; make-up stories; spread exciting rumors; talk absurd; and, what not only to be heard or achieve our goals but not for very long. The book titled, "Vital lies, Simple Truths: Psychology of Self Deception" by Daniel Goleman explains the process of speaking anything and everything but "truth". But not for very long as the proverb goes, "When we close the door on truth, it comes in through the window".*

*One accepts [embraces] truth as a "faith", while "belief" is a deep-rooted assumption carried over generations to generations. The manifestations of the two make the difference: Faith builds conviction and rationality while belief breeds rituals and is often questioned for rationality. Having said this, people who follow "faith" are more likely to accept [speak] all that is true [factual] and twist not [rationalize] the truth out of their personal bias or interest to conceal the facts. These are the people who tend to keep objective view of the world and are dependable.*

*In the treasured verse of the Noble Quran, Allah is guiding His slaves to be persistent for justice and speak nothing but truth [factual]. Even if it goes against your own self or your family and your favored ones, for this is justice.*

*Paradoxically under the disguise of diplomacy, self-interest, necessity, bias and favoritism we often twist the facts and lie with no shame or guilt. For example, now a days it is common for a seller to make dishonest claims about his products; likewise it is common for a buyer to make dishonest claims while negotiating on the price; it is common for people to make lofty statements about their favored ones and make*

dishonest comments about the people they have bias with; so much so that in the court of law lawyers and the witnesses all speak deceitfully thus obstructing justice.

Most of the times we lie knowingly and purposely. But sometimes we also lie unknowingly: a psychological phenomenon explained by Daniel Goleman in his book. Whatever the basis is, hiding the truth or twisting it is a crime for it denies justice and distorts honest perspective. Societies in which people lie and distort facts are deprived of justice, objectivity and equality. For example, on the political front, we all maintain conflicting views about our favored and against parties. Consequently, we fail to make honest and objective judgments about performance of our favored and against political parties, which in turn inhabits the political process whereby government is elected on performance merit. Ironically this fires back to the public at large when not-eligible and dishonest government is elected again and again.

On the social level, the culture of dishonest communication is much detrimental. Media plays a great role in providing honest and candid information or dishonest and misinformation. Unfortunately, media in general is seen spreading dishonest and misinformation more than factual reporting and analyses. Consequently, it is negatively affecting the general level of peacefulness and causing panic and anarchy in the minds of general public. Spreading misinformation and distorting the perceptions of the individuals, especially the naïve ones during the current pandemic is a true reflection of this culture. The consequence is loud and clear: people have gone in self-denial and are not adhering to the safety standards. The result is more and more people are falling prey to the infection.

Speaking lies and twisting facts is also prevalent at the individual level. People for their personal gains (or habits) speak lie and distort facts. Doing so, the loss is bigger than the gain. Generally, the trust level among individuals is lowered; suspicions on each other go out of proportion; and, of all relationships are severed.

It is about time to ponder and change. May Allah guide us and make us practice His advice in the letter and spirit.

## Nurturing Pure Relationships

Noble Quran

“Reward [response] of a favor [kindness] shall be nothing but [return] favor.” [55:60]

Our foremost and permanent relationship is with the creator. It is unique in the sense that we depend on Him for our sustenance and success but He needs no return favors [support] whatsoever from us except being thankful to Him. He says if we are thankful to Him then He shall give more. He is all powerful and self-sustaining. It is He [Allah] who has created our relationships with the kith & Kin; neighbors; colleagues; and fellow human beings; so we can live and do things that we cannot do alone. Hence, a pure relationship must benefit each other but if it does not then it is not a relationship.

In the treasured verse cited above, Allah Subhana Tala is guiding us to build pure relationships by doing “favors”. Meaning everyone must strive to do favors and respond favors voluntarily. It will help enrich our pure relationships and will make the society a truly respectful, supportive and considerate. For example, sending “Salam” [Peace] by the people-of-book on the other person is a favor, which must be returned with an equal favor i.e. “Salam” [Peace]. Likewise, being respectful and considerate to our parents and to all those who had been kind to us, is a due response to the favors they had done when we were young or in need of. Such are the virtues encouraged in the Noble Quran.

A pure relationship is built on mutual respect, compassion, cooperation and favor. In such relationships everyone tends to benefit from each other; no one is deprived, abused or cheated. “Respect” is acknowledging each other’s dignity and rights; “compassion” is empathy for others, “cooperation” is helping each other; and, “favor” is walking an extra mile in helping each other. While all the pillars are important to build pure relationship, the significance of “favor” is most rewarding in enriching and perpetuating the relationships.

Some relationships are based on natural affection and affinity, such as the relationship of parents and their offspring. In such relationship parents essentially compromise for the wellbeing of their children out of their natural affection. Allah has guided us to return their [parents'] favors by being respectful and considerate to them and do favors upon them, especially when they grow older and cannot manage their lives on their own and pray to Allah that He may have mercy upon them as they had favored us when we were young.

Besides, we have relationships with other people for so many different reasons and in different roles. For instance, a teacher and her students; an entrepreneur and his customers; an employer and his employees; fellow citizens; classmates; co-workers; neighbors; even a bystander, etc. It is so important that we strive to build these relationships as well on mutual respect, compassion, cooperation and especially favors.

Sadly, however, sometimes we ignore the virtues of a pure relationship and move to transactional relationships. Doing so, we begin to value our relationships on the basis of need and requirements of a particular transaction, financial or social. For example, instead of valuing all customers entrepreneurs tend to give respect to a few customers who do big business with them and treat not small customers with respect; teachers give more attention to students whose parents oblige them; doctors treat private patients with more care and concentration; employer seldom pays respect to the employees in general and junior employees in particular; we are often respectful to our bosses but not to our colleagues and juniors; we value our neighbor if he is a big shot but give least respect to a common person; so on and so forth. The irony is that such relationships benefits one person and for a given time. As the proverb goes in Japanese culture, "KITA" meaning if one person, being more powerful, abuses the other person then he should wait when the other person gains power and abuse him in return perhaps in a bigger way.

*In modern times our lives have become much mechanical and our relationships have dominantly become transactional. Requirements and needs of the transaction [need of the hour as they say] have eclipsed the virtues of respect, compassion, cooperation and favors. This has grossly eroded the essence of a pure relationship. Apathy, insensitivity, competition, hatred and intolerance are now common among people. In short everyone works with “win-lose” mindset. It is about time to rejuvenate our lives with respect, compassion, cooperation and favors to live, grow and shine in harmony with everyone.*

*May Allah enable us to shape our lives by the divine wisdom and seek Allah's bliss!*





## Canons of Professional Career

Noble Quran

“Your lust for more and more and mutual rivalry for worldly gains has made you heedless, until you reach the graves [102:1-2]; Then you will surely see it with the eye of certainty and then you will surely be asked that Day about pleasure.” [102:7-8]

“And O my people, give full measure and weight in justice and do not deprive the people of their due and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption; What remains [lawful] from Allah is best for you, if you would be believers. But I am not a guardian over you.” [11:85-86]

*Seeking livelihood is a noble action, everyone should do. A livelihood, which is pure [Tayyab] and sought by legitimate [Halal] source, is considered a righteous act [ibadaat]. This follows that discipline and responsibility in seeking livelihood is virtuous: While seeking livelihood it is imperative to protect one's faith, principles and dignity. Moreover, one should select a profession that is morally upright, lawful and beneficial [not just acceptable] for the society as a whole. In short, one should seek his livelihood with a moral, social and legal responsibility. Continually upgrading one's professional knowledge and skills for seeking even better professional prospects is incumbent upon each of us.*

*In the cited verses of Noble Quran Allah has warned us from longing for more of worldly gains [wealth and comforts]. He says those who strive for more are heedless until they go to their grave then they will certainly know that they will be questioned about it on the day-of-judgment. He further guides us to act morally and lawfully in earning livelihood and that whatever little they may earn per the guidance of Allah is better than longing for more that is impure [khabees] through illegitimate [haram] source.*

*Allah Has already ordained the extent to which every soul shall get: We may keep “Trust” on Allah and act responsibly (righteously) to earn what Allah has ordained for us, or we may falsely rely on our own and disobey Allah to earn more even then we shall get what is ordained for us. When we trust Allah and act righteously, we shall have the pleasure of Allah [a little would suffice us] but if we act arrogantly and transgress, we will earn Allah's curse [even more would not suffice us]. Allah has mentioned in His revelation that “when nations [people] transgress and Allah knows that they shall not*

take heed He grants abundance of livelihood to them so they increase in their arrogance then Allah sends His punishment onto them.”

In Sura Jumma [62:11] Allah has explained: “But when they saw an ongoing transaction or a diversion, [O Muhammad], they rushed to it and left you standing. Say; what is with Allah is better than diversion and trade [that they long for], and Allah is the best of providers [of livelihood].” Reflecting on this treasured verse, we can find its analogies in abundance in our modern lives. To begin with, our mindset of maximizing wealth and seeking pleasures has practically redefined the standards of morality and legitimacy. For example, a person with this mindset would seek a job solely on the quantitative value of potential earnings, doing so he or she would disregard whether the job [and the business] is morally upright and legitimate [tayyab and halal] or not; a shop would rather sell smuggled goods for seeking higher margin; a gas station would adjust its pumps to give less measure for more money; a cigarette company would encourage more smokers (Customers) disregarding the health hazards of smoking; an eatery would offer low quality food to increase its profit; a clothing company would introduce branded clothes only to fetch higher price; an investor would invest (hoard) in real estate, gold, edibles and even in virtual commodities and what not to sell at a higher price in future; last but not the least, a public servant and a service recipient together get and pay bribe for a rightful [lawful] as well as illegitimate [unlawful] public matter so the public servant gets extra money and service recipient gets it decreed in his favor; etc.

If each of us pursue our professions to seek Allah’s pleasure and blessings and start trusting on Him [act with Sabr] that we shall surely get what He has ordained for us while resolutely upholding our faith, principles and dignity then In Shaa Allah He would make whatever little or more we may earn in a morally and legitimately upright manner, sufficient for us. May Allah guide me in my professional career and enable me to practice this in the letter and spirit [Ameen].



## Denial is a Curse

Noble Quran

*[Allah] The Most Merciful, [who] Taught the Qur'an, Created man [women], [And] taught him eloquence.  
So, which of the favors of your Lord would you deny? [55:1-4 & 13]*

Do we think that who we are today is our own endeavor? If we seriously think so then we are in a big trouble! What if we were not born, what if our parents had not fed us, what if they had not sent us to school, what if we had no relationships? In short, no life no opportunities. Yet if we deny all the favors we got to reach where we are today is not just denial of what others did for us but also blindfold us: We would try to live and work alone but we cannot do so and we shall never be able to unleash our potentials and opportunities - We cannot educate ourselves without interacting with teachers and reading books (written by others); we all need family and friends for we cannot live without them; we cannot earn our livelihood without working for an organization (people) who create work opportunities and give money to us. Walt Disney was once asked to explain one thing that made his enterprise the "Disney World" famous for innovation in entertainment. He said, "I simply brought together individuals who were more competent himself in their own areas of expertise who then collectively created the enterprise. When each of them was alone they could not accomplish anything." What if Walt Disney himself or his colleagues had denied the support of each other, could they have continued to stay together and do wonders. Not just this, as a curse of denying they would have lost their future prospects altogether.

In the cited treasured verse of Surah Rahman, Allah reminds us of His few of infinite undeniable favors, He is kind to us; He gave us Quran - book of knowledge; He gave us life when we never existed; and, He taught us to communicate. These are the profound favors Allah has done on us, besides so much more He does for us. After reminding His favors He then asks if we would still prefer to deny. If we do so, we would do it for our own loss. Let us honestly analyze each of these four favors.

It is time to ponder if Allah had not been merciful towards His creations especially to the mankind, He would not have made this world a livable place for us – no air to breath, no protection from the sun, no moon to bright the night, no stars to guide our way, no food to stay alive, no shelter to protect, no kindness among people.

Allah gave us Quran as a book of knowledge (facts and principles) so to live our lives to attain success in this life and life hereafter. Through this Quran (and other holy revelations before it) Allah informed us of our pure relationship with Him; provided us with the purpose of life; and, provided principles – rights and wrongs, good and bad – to follow. Without His guidance, we could never understand our relationship with Allah, the very purpose of our life and knew the path of success.

Allah created us when we were nothing and gave us heaps of opportunities. He made us intelligent, empowered and capable being. So much so that all the development to date and that would continue to follow in this world is because of our intellect, empowerment and capability that He bestowed.

We would not have attained the development that we have accomplished to date and would not have been able to continue to do so if we had been struggling alone. Allah taught us to communicate – share knowledge, understanding, concepts, ideas and more – among ourselves, which made the creation of new knowledge and development possible.

Does all this not require us to acknowledge Allah's favors upon us in a befitting manner i.e. being thankful by our words and actions; and, follow His guidance thankfully in all aspects of our lives knowing that it this is the only right way.

Besides the incumbency of acknowledging and being thankful to Allah and His prophets *pbut*, we also need to acknowledge and thank fellow men and women for their favors. To start with, our parents who become the source of our creation and who do infinite kindness on us through our lives especially during child hood; our siblings who make our lives loveable and easy; our teachers who educate us; our

employers who give us opportunity to work, excel and earn livelihood; our friends who fill our lives with joy and support; and especially our helpers (servants) who clean our homes, wash our cloths, cook our meals and a lot; etc.

We have a choice to live with the curse of denying or acknowledge and thank Allah and then fellow human beings to unleash our potentials and live a happier life. May Allah guide us to continue taking heed from His Quran and make us live the knowledge into practice thankfully and sincerely.



## Pride is a Disillusion

Noble Quran

What! You erect for mere pleasure (show-off) a monument on every high spot, and build huge castles as if you were immortal; and when you seize somebody (the weak), you seize him (unjustly) as a tyrant. So, fear Allah and obey me. So, fear Allah and obey me. [26: 128 - 131]

*'Shahjahan' the Mughal King, built the famous Taj Mahal (monument) over the grave of his beloved wife; King 'Edward' built King Edward Medical College in memory of his wife who died during child birth. One acted out of pride and the other acted pragmatically.*

*We all take pride on our achievements; possessions; status or authority etc., for pride is considered a sign of cherishing success. It is commonly said that one should take pride in what he or she achieves to build confidence to achieve even higher in the future. Pride is also considered necessary for maintaining self-esteem; if a person does not take pride himself or herself and in what he or she does, his or her self-worth is then damaged. Paradoxically however, shallow behavior, show-off and arrogance are the usual manifestations of pride.*

*In the treasured verse of Surah Ash-Shu'araa cited above, Allah the exalted has described the "Proud" as those who spend their scarce resources (including time) on doing things merely for pleasure and show-off. Such as building giant monuments that are of no real value for themselves or for others, except looking good. He (Allah) further said, they spend extravagantly on building huge (luxurious) castles (accumulating worldly possessions) assuming that they shall live forever. No! But they will die and go to their graves like a common person leaving all their possessions behind. Yet another manifestation of pride is that they treat unjustly and with arrogance those who are in their possessions. The moral is, while they do all this for mere pleasure, they forget that they will be questioned for all this absurd action on the Day of Judgment and punishment would follow.*

*This has lessons for us indeed! Pride destroys our relationships; how many times we tend to distance ourselves from our childhood relations just because our status is way above theirs and end up living alone.*

*To satisfy our pride we often spend huge amounts of resources only to show off and compete with others; as a result, our needs for resources burst compelling us to compromise on virtues and values of integrity to earn more and more.*

*Those given authority over others (like seniors, employers, even teachers) abuse them without shame and guilt rather sometimes they justify it as a means to discipline them. But in fact, they do so to safeguard their authority over them or to manipulate them unjustly. It is a sheer displacement from managing behavior to controlling physically and mentally, which in fact inhibits productive performance.*

*Finally put pride blind folds us on our weaknesses and real needs, rationality, relationships and respect for others; make us complacent; and distracts us from the righteous path. Example of Satan is a witness in this regard, who lost his status and destroyed his future just because he took pride in himself.*

*It is time to weigh the benefits and costs of being "Proud". The honest answer would be that cost of compromising relationships, spending on show-off and abusing others is huge in this life and the punishment in the eternal life is even worse. May Allah save us from falling into the trap of "Pride"?*





## A Positive Attitude

Noble Quran

And whoever is grateful - his gratitude is only for [the benefit of] himself. And whoever is ungrateful - then indeed, my Lord is Free of need and Generous." 27:40  
And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe.' 14:7

*We always have a choice either to cherish or curse our life, relationships, career, wealth and opportunities. It is a fact that those who live with the "positive attitude" find peace of mind and unleash success in their lives. On the contrary, those who keep cursing never find peace in their lives and rather end-up losing even what they have today. We all know this but not everyone really practices it in the letter and spirit. What can help us develop this "positive attitude" is the main theme of this short article.*

*First of all, let us reflect on the divine wisdom on the "attitude of gratitude". In the cited verses, Allah is guiding us that if we are grateful to Him [live with the attitude of gratitude] it will be for our own advantage but if we curse then Allah does not need our gratitude for He is self-sustaining and generous. Allah further announces that He increases peace of mind and help unleash success of those who are grateful, but He severely punishes those who deny and curse. This punishment could be in the form of pessimistic attitude, loss of peace of mind, lack of confidence, scarce mentality, so on and so forth.*

*Now we know that "Attitude of gratitude" is a must for attaining peace of mind and unleashing success. To start with let us count our blessings by asking these questions to ourselves: What if I had not born; though I lived a mediocre life I had the pleasure of growing up with my parents unlike an orphan; though I don't live a lavish life but I am healthy normal person unlike if I were extra rich but challenged with a physical disability or had life time ailment; though I did not go to good school yet I did my degree unlike those who never went to school; though I do not make extra money on the job but still I am able to meet the ends in my life and live with a peace of mind. It is impossible to count all the advantages that we enjoy, what we need is to develop this habit of acknowledging them.*

Let us look at what help us develop this attitude and restrains. Looking at the positive side is a great habit. An old saying explains it very well. When a glass of half-filled water was presented to two persons; the first person interpreted it as “Half filled” while the other person interpreted it as “Half empty”. First person obviously had a habit of looking at the positive side while the second person had a habit of denial. From this simple example it is clear that the way they interpreted the same situation made the difference. What words we use to describe the situation have impact on our interpretation. So often we interpret our opportunities [blessings] as challenges [curse]. For example, so often a young college graduate might describe his first job as low paid but would ignore the learning and growth potentials; with this attitude he is likely to quit and lose the opportunity. But if he considers it as an opportunity for secure future; he is likely to progress steadily in his career. In short, it is a “Cherish or Perish” syndrome.

Urgency to achieve all at once, yawning needs and heedless desires turn into subtle greed. Living with a greed makes it difficult to focus on what we have as we keep looking for more; a dissatisfied attitude forever. Put it differently, a competing mind encourages need for more and more, however heedlessly. On the contrary patience, harnessing [limiting] needs and restraining heedless desires help build contentment, which in turn inculcates “attitude of gratitude”.

In conclusion, we need to follow righteous path – pursue that is moral and legitimate and restrain from immoral and unlawful; take a rational view of our achievements and goals; acknowledge; interpret positively; last but not the least, share our blessings with others should we earn Allah’s pleasure, live with peace of mind and unleash success.



## Humility Conquers Aggression

Noble Quran

“And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth humbly, and when the ignorant address them [harshly], they say [words of] peace.” [25:63]

Paradoxically pride, arrogance and aggressive attitude are the hallmarks of a strong and powerful personality, in modern times. Though often it is argued in support of it that these are the signs of competitiveness and is necessary to survive and succeed in today's fiercely competing world. In short, “if I don't kill the other, he will kill me” is the assumption we work with. Humility on the contrary is considered a sign of weak personality.

In the treasured verse of the Holy Quran, Allah has guided us that righteous persons always [most sincerely] show humility, compassion and respect for others. Even when other persons act harshly or humiliate them, they restrain to respond to them likewise. Through the humility, compassion and respect they exert a positive influence on the other persons thus encouraging them to change. Besides, one more thing is clear from their behavior that they respond not to the people but follow what their Lord [Allah] has guided them and seek His bliss not of people.

Time to ask to ourselves if it is positive to act aggressively, arrogantly and to abuse others. Has aggression, arrogance and abusive behavior ever made someone win over others forever? In fact, often times it kicks back in even a bigger way. In Japanese culture there is a famous proverb “KITA”, which means if I abuse someone today, he shall abuse me later. In a hope to change, we should critically look into the reasons as to why we act aggressively and humiliate fellow human beings. The answer is: We are trained to compete not cooperate with each other. In other words, it is often a deep rooted believe that we must defeat [belittle] others to win. Other reasons may include; when we want to hide our incompetence, when we lie, when we are wrong and unjust, when we are guilty of cheating and abusing others rights, when we want to crush someone's self-esteem and dignity, lastly when we know we

*deserve not our position above them. By looking at these reasons from a candid eye we can see these are irrational, abusive and destructive for enriching relationships.*

*On the positive side being humble, compassionate and respectful to others inculcates similar attitude in others towards us. Besides showing humility, compassion and respect to fellow human inculcates cooperation and strengthen relationships. Above all, in the context of above Verse it brings peace from Allah All Mighty in this life and in shaa Allah will get reward in the life hereafter. The key to change is to accept that in the eyes of Most Gracious Allah every fellow human is equal in status: In the words of beloved Prophet pbuh, last of all Prophets [pbuh], "in the Eyes of Allah, if there is any superiority of a person over other is his or her deity (cleanliness of the soul).*

*O'Allah please make us humble, compassionate and respectful towards all mankind even though some of them may not be so to us. Please be pleased with us and send peace unto us. Ameen.*



## Living a Successful and Happier Life

Noble Quran

“Indeed, Allah does [will] not change the condition of a people [society] until they change what is in themselves.” 13:11

I am sure you don't know anyone who slept one night expecting his life would change and the next morning when he woke-up it had become successful and happier. Had change come by simply desiring, everyone would have lived a successful and happier life: It never comes by simply wishing to change. Our success and happiness are an outcome of how we live, relate and work – our actions. To improve [or to worsen] our success and happiness; we must change the way we life, relate and work.

In the treasured verse of the Noble Quran, Allah All Mighty is guiding us of the just process of change: He says, “first we need to correct [change] our outlook – our values, vision, goals and most importantly our characteristics [attitude and habits] – before help from Allah comes to change the way we live, relate and work for a successful and happier living. And He shall also then change our abode in the life hereafter [Allah knows better].”

Who does not want to be a successful and happy person: Everyone does and should. However here is a point of caution: Success and happiness are relative terms. Different people define it differently. The wise and knowledgeable Muslim defines success essentially as the path that takes him or her to Allah's bliss and heaven [and saves from the hell] in the next life. He or she finds happiness in the contentment of what he or she is rewarded from Allah that is pure [halal] and clean [tayyab] and offering thanks to Him. Many of us, however, think not this way and consider being successful and find happiness in worldly possessions given to them as a trial. Their success and happiness are a disguised fiasco [failure] and would soon turn into sorrow. Because they care less if these come to them as clean and pure or dirty [haram] and

impure [khabees]. Allah guides those and protects them from losing who bring clean heart and pure intentions.

Ironically, our contemporary standards of success and happiness are in gross contradiction of the above. We teach our children that they must aim at attaining more and more worldly achievements; and, we teach them to find happiness in their worldly achievements. Nothing is wrong so far. But the problems arise when we make them believe in their own will and hard work alone to get what they wish, and let them unconsciously deny their destinies. Another problem arises when we let them focus on maximizing their achievements without honest concern for the “pure” and “clean”. Finally, another problem arises when we give credit to them for the achievements making them thankless to Allah. Such are the people who consider that this is life is the ultimate and they shall return not to their creator [Allah], who will ask them if they spent their lives following their lusts or seeking Allah’s bliss for a successful abode in the life hereafter.

Unfortunately, as we introspect our lives, we find ourselves more of following our lusts and pleasures and less of seeking Allah’s bliss. Yet we live with this desire to get Allah’s bounties in this life and pardon in the life hereafter – a self-denial and living dichotomy that will take us nowhere.



## Living with Trust and Patience

Noble Quran

[O Muhammad] Do Sabr; indeed, the [best] outcome is for the righteous. 11:49 And do Sabr. Indeed, Allah is with the sabreen. 8:46 Do Sabr over what befalls you. 31:17

*So much uncertainty surrounds our lives: Will I accomplish my plans? If I try hard will I pass the exam? Will I get a job? Will the job get me what I want? Will s/he do what s/he promised? Will the future be better? So, on and so forth. Everyone must live with the uncertainty, for no one can predict.*

*In the cited verse of the Noble Quran, Allah is guiding us through the Prophet pbuh that the best outcome is for those who do Sabr, Allah further assures that He is with them. He further encourages us to do Sabr over what befalls (mishap, disaster and tragedy). Reflecting on these treasured verses, we can say that Sabr is about keeping “Hope” primarily from Allah that He will surely help us; make outcomes of our efforts better; and, shall do justice. Sabr is also accepting patiently when faced with mishap, disaster and tragedy purely for the sake of earning Allah’s reward [Sawab]. In short, Sabr is to have unconditional trust [tawakal] on Allah.*

*To work towards goals with consistency, we need to see “light at the end of the tunnel” – a ray of hope and expectation. The “Expectancy Theory of Motivation<sup>1</sup>” describes importance of the “hope” in motivating individuals when uncertainty abounds. It is however silent on what can inculcate the “hope”. The key word is “Trust”: Do we trust that everything is in the hands of Allah and that He is just in decreeing the outcome; do we trust that if we work in the right direction then Allah will help us succeed; do we trust ourselves that we can do if Allah wills, likewise do we trust others that they will do what they promised if Allah wills; and, do we trust on the system that it works the way it should be if Allah wills? Higher the trust, higher will be the hope and vice versa.*

*Just like in doing business risk is inevitable. So are the mishaps, disasters and tragedies in our lives. So long we live we will get these alongside successes. Mishaps,*



disasters and tragedies befall in our lives so Allah can test us (our faith [trust] and steadfastness). Here doing “Sabr” means accepting what befalls patiently with the hope of earning Allah’s reward (sawab). Besides responding to a calamity patiently allows us to move on in our lives optimistically. But if we curse and do not accept the calamity it will earn us Allah’s anger besides turning us pessimistic and losing our future. (Allah says, “And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger, and a loss of wealth and lives and yields, but give good tidings to the patient who, when disaster strikes them, say, ‘Indeed we belong to God, and indeed to Him we will return.’ Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided” [2:155-157]. Mother Aisha RA reported Allah's Messenger [may peace be upon him] as saying: A believer does not undergo (the trouble) of running a thorn or more than that when Allah effaces his sins.” [Sahih Muslim, Book 32, Hadith 6239])



## Satanic Conspiracies

Facts noted in the Quran about how Satan attacked humans are for our lessons and warnings against him. Satanic conspiracies are continuing since the creation of Prophet Adam PBUH., however, the manifestations have become disguised so much so that we fail to relate our sinful behavior with the satanic legacies of the past. Hence, we are unable to take lessons or see the warnings.

Many Satanic legacies are much prevalent in our times, yet we are ignorant or naïve of it. Some are narrated below for awareness. May Allah accept this effort and may Allah save me and my fellow human beings from getting into Satan's Trap.

Satan motivated Prophet Adam and his wife Hawa PBUT, for false gains (longer life and wealth) only by disobeying Allah. The outcome of it was end of their abode in Jannah and start of worldly tribulations and worries;

Ironically, this satanic conspiracy continues under the disguise of "Motivation" for heedless material progress, comfort and luxuries: All leading to tribulations and worries. In the Noble Quran, Allah says, And they get distracted (from the righteous path) as they continue pursuing for more and more of worldly gains [possessions] and increase in rivalry until they reach to their graves. In Sura Waqiah, Allah says there would be a group of people who would be destined to Hell because they had lived their lives in comfort and luxuries in this world.

When Prophet Moses PBUH went to Pharaoh to invite him into Islam, he flatly refused on the suspicion that Prophet Moses PBUH wants to take over his position and power. It is noted in the Noble Quran that he said to his

people that this person (Moses PBUH) wants to take over your nation from you.

Today many times we fail to accept truth (Haq) only because of our suspicion, which is falling prey to Satan. In Quran Allah says, "Satan whispers fear of becoming poor".

His legacy continues as some of us heedlessly earning more and more wealth and gaining more and more power, without concern for disobeying Allah (earning money from Haram and gaining power aggressively). Examples abound.

In Quran Allah tells, "As Satan misguided Prophet Adam and his wife Hawa PBUT, they lost their decency so they started covering their private parts with leaves". This legacy of Satan continues as people of our times have lost their decency under the disguise of Right to look good, Fashion and now they say, "It is my body it is my choice".

In Quran Allah tells, "When Allah completed creating Prophet Adam PBUH, he told all the angles and Satan to prostrate to him. Everyone did except Satan. Allah the all knower (for the sake of establishing evidence) asked Satan why he did not prostrate. Satan replied, (You) created me with fire and him with clay (he took pride of being superior).

Today we disobey Allah saying that we have knowledge and power, we need no God (Allah). Likewise, even those who have faith in Allah sometimes humiliate others (make fun of them); and, make wrong decisions all because of three alphabets [EGO].

A person who was the Knight of his tribe failed to accept Islam despite in his own words he believed that Prophet Muhammad PBUH was a genuine

prophet of Allah. Because he was afraid of what his people would say (how would they respond)?

Today despite believing that many concepts, things or actions are sinful (shirk or kufar) we fail to discard them from our lives just because we are afraid of people around us (culture).

